

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 00464 01 OF 02 181442Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01 DHA-02 ACDA-07 EB-08 CU-02 /091 W
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P R 181345Z FEB 77

FM AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2116

INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION NATO

AMCONSUL MUNICH

USUN NEW YORK 521

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRAGUE 0464

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINT CSCE SHUM CZ

SUBJECT: CHARTER 77 - AN UPDATE

REF: A. VIENNA 1089 AND 1212; B. ROME 1908; C. MOSCOW 2042

D. STOCKHOLM 730 AND 750

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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 00464 01 OF 02 181442Z

1. SUMMARY: THIS MESSAGE REVIEWS RECENT HIGHLIGHTS OF DEVELOPMENTS
HERER RELATED TO CHARTER 77. IT OMITTS REFERENCES TO DETENTION
OF NYT CORRESPONDENT PAUL HOFMANN, WHICH HAS BEEN REPORTED IN
EXTENSO IN SEPTELS. BOTH THE REGIME AND CHARTER 77 ACTIVISTS
APPEAR DETERMINED TO CONTINUE THE STRUGGLE OVER HUMAN RIGHTS AT
LEASE UNTIL THE BELGRADE 77 PREPARATORY MEETING CONVENES. NEITHER

GROUP HAS TAKEN ANY SIGNIFICANT INITIATIVES AGAINST THE OTHER RECENTLY. SOME CHARTER SUPPORTERS HAVE BEGUN TO FEAR THAT MOSCOW'S CURRENTLY INTENSIFIED CAMPAIGN AGAINST HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS MAY SIGNAL A HARDER LINE HERE, BUT THEY SHOW NO SIGN OF BACKING DOWN. END SUMMARY

2. ACTION AND REACTION: THE RELEASE BY CHARTER 77 ACTIVISTS IN EARLY FEBRUARY OF NAMES OF AN ADDITIONAL 208 SIGNERS DID NOT MAKE MUCH OF A RIPPLE IN PRAGUE, ALTHOUGH IT WAS WELL PUBLICIZED IN THE WEST. PARTY SECRETARY VASIL BILAK, BIG GUN OF THE HARD LINERS, DID, HOWEVER, LOSE THE MOST EXTENDED BLAST WE HAVE YET SEEN AGAINST THE CHARTER SUPPORTERS IN A SPEECH TO A MEETING OF ENTERAL POLITICAL FUNCTIONARIES FEBRUARY 7. AS REPORTED IN THE PRESS BILAK, POSSIBLY STUNG BY A REPORT TO THE NY TIMES BY PAUL HOFMANN SUGGESTING THAT THERE WAS DISUNITY IN THE LEADERSHIP OVER HANDLING OF THE CHARTER ISSUE, PROCLAIMED AT LENGTH THAT UNITY REIGNS IN THE HUSAK REGIME. HE REPEATED IN STRONG TERMS THE FAMILIAR ALLEGATIONS THAT CHARTER SUPPORTERS ARE SUBVERSIVES SERVING THE INTERESTS OF FOREIGN ENEMIES OF COMMUNISM. HE POINTED OUT THAT THE CHARTER 77 EPISODE WAS POSSIBLY UNIQUE IN THAT "COUNTER-REVOLUTION" HAD BEEN DEALT WITHBY "POLITICAL MEANS" AND NONE OF THE ACTIVISTS HAD BEEN PUT ON TRIAL. BILAK LATER IN THE SPEECH WARNED THAT THE PATIENCE AND TOLERANCE "OF THE PEOPLE" WERE NOT, HOWEVER, ENDLESS.

3. THE SIGNERS: IN SPITE OF THIS WARNING AND CONTINUED SPORADIC HARASSMENTS, MOST CHARTER 77 LEADERS ARE CHIPPER, KEEPING SAMIZDAT TYPEWRITERS POUNDING AND STILL WILLING TO TALK WITH FOREIGNERS. NYT CORRESPONDENT PAUL HOFMANN, VISITING FROM VIENNA, INTERVIEWED CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 PRAGUE 00464 01 OF 02 181442Z

KOHOUT, HAJEK, VACULIK, KINZL AND OTHERS BETWEEN FEBRUARY 5 AND 12 AND FOUND THEM UNDER NO VISIBLE SURVEILLANCE AND DETERMINED TO KEEP UP ACTIVITY UNTIL BELGRADE 77 OPENS. KOHOUT, HOWEVER, TOLD HOFMANN THAT HE PERSONALLY IS WORRIED THAT BILAK'S SPEECH MIGHT REPRESENT A STEP TOWARD TRIALS AND IMPRISONMENT. SIGNS THAT MOSCOW IS INTENSIFYING ITS REPRESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVITIES MAY ALSO BE CAUSING INCREASING UNEASE AMONG OTHER SIGNERS. THE SECOND BATCH OF 208 HAS, HOWEVER, REPORTEDLY NOT BEEN QUESTIONED BY THE POLICE. TREATMENT OF THE FIRST BATCH HAS BEEN INCONSISTENT: SOME HAVE NOT BEEN INTERROGATED, SOME HAVE LOST JOBS, BUT OTHERS HAVE NOT. HAVEL IS STILL IN JAIL, BUT THE LEGALLY PERMITTED PERIOD OF INVESTIGATIVE DETENTION HAS EXPIRED, SO THE AUTHORITIES MUST SOON DECIDE WHETHER TO RELEASE HIM AND HIS 3 COPRISONERS OR TO FILE FORMAL CHARGES; A NEW CHARTER 77 DOCUMENT POINTING OUT THIS LEGAL REQUIREMENT APPEARED FEBRUARY 17. WE UNDERSTAND THAT ORNEST, A DIABETIC, IS ILL AND HAS BEEN MOVED TO A HOSPITAL FOR TREATMENT (SOME RUMORS SAY HE IS DEAD, BUT MOST HAVE HIM UNDER TREATMENT).

4. DUBCEK: THESE ACTIVISTS ALSO GAVE HOFMANN A COPY OF A SAMIZDAT STATEMENT ON DUBCEK'S ATTITUDE TOWARD CHARTER 77, WHICH WAS APPARENTLY THE BASIS FOR THE VIENNA ARBEITER ZEITUNG REPORT (REF A) THAT DUBCEK FULLY ENDORSES CHARTER 77. ON THE OTHER HAND, THEY NOTED THAT, AS REF B REPORTED JIRI PEILKAN SAYING, DUBCEK STILL THINKS HE MAY HAVE A POLITICAL FUTURE IF MOSCOW LOSES PATIENCE WITH THE HUSAK REGIME.

5. PARTY MEETING: AT LEAST PERIPHERALLY RELATED, THE PARTY ON FEBRUARY 10 CONVENED A MEETING, CHAIRED BY CC SECRETARY JOSEF HAVLIN, OF REGIONAL AND TOWN PARTY SECRETARIES CHARGED WITH IDEOLOGICAL WORK "ON CURRENT QUESTIONS OF CPCZ ACTIVITY IN THE CULTURAL-POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL FIELD." PRESS REPORTING OF THE MEETING DID NOT MENTION CHARTER 77,

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PAGE 01 PRAGUE 00464 02 OF 02 181446Z
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CONFIDENTIAL SECTION 2 OF 2 PRAGUE 0464

BUT SAID THE MEETING DEALT PRIMARILY WITH CULTURAL POLICY, ESPECIALLY REALIZATION OF THE CONCLUSIONS OF THE XV PARTY CONGRESS AND WITH PREPARATIONS FOR FORTHCOMING CONGRESSES OF THE ARTISTIC UNIONS. AGITPROP AND PARTY WORK IN ACADEMIC AND SCIENTIFIC FIELDS WERE ALSO DISCUSSED. COMMENT: CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 PRAGUE 00464 02 OF 02 181446Z

ALTHOUGH VERY LIKELY A ROTINE GATHERING OF PARTY OFFICIALS, THE MEETING ALSO PROVIDED AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE THEM A PEP TALK ON DEALING WITH CHARTER 77 AND A CHANCE TO ASSESS ANY PROBLEMS FACED BY LOCAL PARTY ORGANIZATIONS ARISING FROM THE CHARTER ISSUE. IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT THE MEETING OCCURRED DURING THE VISIT OF CPSU SECRETARY KAPITONOV, WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR PARTY PERSONNEL PROBLEMS. END COMMENT.

6. MEDIA: THE PRAVDA ARTICLE (REF C) WAS PROMINENTLY REPRINTED HERE AND FOLLOWED BY RUDE PRAVO EDITORIALS WHICH INTENSIFIED WARNINGS TO DISSIDENTS AS WELL AS THE COUNTERATTACK AGAINST WESTERN CRITICISM. THE MEDIA HAVE CONTINUED TO HIT THE CHARTER AND TO DEFEND THE EASTERN RECORD ON HUMAN RIGHTS, USUALLY BY DRAWING FAVORABLE COMPARISONS WITH THE WEST, ESPECIALLY ON UNEMPLOYMENT. THE MEDIA HAVE ALSO CONTINUED TO REPORT DAILY, UNTIL A FEW DAYS AGO, ON NEW SIGNATURES BEING ADDED TO STATEMENTS OF SOLIDARITY WITH THE REGIME'S CULTURAL POLICY. POP MUSICIANS MADE UP THE MOST IMPORTANT NEW GROUP BROUGHT INTO THE FOLD. SWISS DCM TELLS US THAT IN VISIT TO PILSEN HE LEARNED THAT WORKERS IN RELATIVELY SMALL ENTERPRISES THERE HAVE SIGNED SUCH STATEMENTS BUT PERSONNEL IN BIG INDUSTRIES-- LIKE SKODA -- HAVE NOT.

7 EXTERNAL PROBLEMS: THE GOC LOST ONE ROUND AND SURVIVED ANOTHER IN ITS CAMPAIGN TO MAINTAIN A BUSINESS AS USUAL APPROACH ON THE FOREIGN FRONT. PRIME MINISTER STROUGAL'S OFFICIAL VISIT TO AUSTRIA WAS POSTPONED BY THE GOC, WHICH CITED "AN OVERLOAD OF WORK"; AN OVERLOAD OF PROTESTS IS A MORE LIKELY EXPLANATION. AUSTRIAN DCM SAYS THE GOC WANTS TO AVOID RESCHEDULING A STROUGAL VISIT TOO NEAR A SCHEDULED GATHERING OF SUDETEN GERMANS IN VIENNA IN MAY. HIS GUESS IS THAT STROUGAL MAY DELAY HIS
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PAGE 03 PRAGUE 00464 02 OF 02 181446Z

VISIT UNTIL FALL. DURING HIS VISIT TO SWEDEN DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER SPACIL FACED A BARRAGE OF HOSTILE QUESTIONS AND COMMENT FROM THE SWEDISH PRESS (REF D) AND FAILED TO ACHIEVE THE PUBLIC RELATIONS SUCCESS HE WANTED, ALTHOUGH COVERAGE OF HIS VISIT BY CZECHOSLOVAK MEDIA COMPLETELY CONCEALED HIS FAILURE.

8. COMMENT: SO FAR NEITHER SIDE IN THIS STRUGGLE HAS MANAGED TO SOFTEN THE POSITION OF THE OTHER. BOTH HAVE RUN OUT OF FRESH INITIATIVES AND MAY BE CONTENT TO GRIND SLOWLY AWAY AT EACH OTHER FOR SOME TIME. THE ACTIVISTS ARE CONTINUING TO RECEIVE PUBLICITY IN THE WEST WITHOUT MUCH FURTHER STIMULUS ON THEIR PART. IT IS NOTABLE, HOWEVER, THAT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO RALLY MANY OF THE ESTIMATED 350,000 - 400,000 FORMER DUBCEK SUPPORTERS STILL OUT OF FAVOR WITH THE LEADERSHIP. INDEED, THE HUSAK REGIME MAY CONSIDER THAT ITS MOST SIGNIFICANT ACHIEVMENT IN THE CHARTER 77 STRUGGLE IS ITS SUCCESS IN KEEPING THE MASSES OF ONETIME DUBCEK SUPPORTERS NEUTRALIZED. THE REGIME DOUBTLESS HOPES TO CONTINUE CONTAINING POPULAR SUPPORT FOR CHARTER 77 THROUGH AUTHORATIVE WARNINGS, SUCH AS BILAK'S, WHILE ATTEMPTING TO PURSUE BUSINESS AS USUAL WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD.
BYRNE

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